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A special summer school program for 60 selected high school dropouts was conducted by a county schools office. A major purpose was to prepare these dropouts, attitudinally and educationally, to re-enter a regular school program. The three counselors were assigned 20 students each. The students were required to attend daily classes in mathematics, English, reading, counseling, and activities. Parent conferences were an integral part of the total program. The curriculum incorporated an analytical approach toward problem-solving which allowed the student to realize a certain amount of success in his work each day. Followup studies including monthly interviews conducted since the first program in 1964 offered proof that a similar program would be offered in 1965 to another group of dropouts. Successful practices employed in the special summer school have been emulated by other schools as preventive measures.							
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LAURENCE L. BELANGER
SECTION EDITOR

The Dropouts Did Come Back

A Special Summer Guidance School Program

By Ralph C. Hickman

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"School's out! school's out!" was the cry last June for 265,000 students in Orange County. But this was not so for 60 selected teenagers who had dropped out of school sometime during the preceding year and were now invited to attend a special summer guidance school.



Ralph C. Hickman

As Monday morning dawned, two questions were foremost in the minds of seven staff members: "Will they show up? Will high school dropouts really give up their summer beach and surfing

time to attend summer school, even a special one like this?"

As the young people arrived that Monday morning and sat down in the J. P. Greeley School auditorium, they sent tentative, shy glances toward each other. This was a mixed group that ranged from 15 to 20 years of age. Some were surfers with bleached hair and no shoes. Some were poorly dressed. There was a sprinkling of Mexican-Americans.

They listened skeptically to the director of the project who said:

You are here not only to help yourselves but also to help dropouts throughout the country who have similar problems. This is a pilot program which could have national significance. You are important to us and to yourselves. We will try to help you understand your personal problems and to help you raise your achievement in math, English, and reading. We will show you future job possibilities and provide student activities such as student government, art, and sports. This summer we will help you prepare to return to school in the fall.

Thus, the Orange County Summer Guidance School was launched on June 22, 1964.

Directed by the Orange County Superintendent of Schools, a countywide educational committee composed of a representative from each of the 12 high school districts was organized in September, 1961. They compiled school information and personal data of over 3,000 early school leavers for a year and a half.

It was learned from this study that the school dropout generally possessed an average intelligence, with as deep a desire to achieve as his in-school counterpart. However, the study showed that the dropout student lacks the self-confidence and self-motivation to continue his educational plans. He is generally behind his grade level in the basic academic subjects such as reading, spelling, mathematics, and English.

All students in Orange County who had dropped out of school from 1961 to 1963 were mailed a personal letter from the County Superintendent of Schools inviting them to learn about the summer school guidance program.

The 60 students selected were a representative sample of the school dropout. They ranged in age from 15.3 to 19.5 years, with a mean age of 17.4; one-third of these were girls. Based on a standardized mental ability test, the IQ ranged from 65 to 111, with a mean of 91. Reading ability grade level ranged from 1.0 to 13.4. Mathematics grade placement ranged from 3.5 to 12.3, with a mean of 7.8 at the beginning of the summer school. Their social and economic differences varied as widely as their academic and mental abilities.

The Program

The educational program had to be flexible enough to meet the challenge of rapid changes in attitudes, behavior, and educational growth. To facilitate an individualized program, the student body was divided into four groups based on intellectual ability. Each group attended five periods a day for six weeks. All

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students were required to attend daily a period each of mathematics, English, and reading, thus leaving two periods a day available to the student for counseling and activities.

The three counselors on the staff were assigned 20 students each. Their daily schedule permitted five periods of counseling plus three hours allotted to parent conferences and field trips.

Individual counseling played a vital role in the guidance program. Group counseling, however, proved to be most effective in molding a student body, representing 26 high schools, into one unit.

It was further discovered from group counseling sessions that because of the period of time spent out of school, the students had developed an eagerness for an opportunity to discuss their personal and social experiences since they had left school. They seemed ready to face issues concerning their future and their educational goals.

As a result of the knowledge gained from these counseling sessions, the guidance staff decided that more advanced techniques were necessary in working with these young adults. Special counseling aids were used such as a word meaning test, personal values checklist, "I want" list, job education checklist, self-evaluation work sheet, and study activities checklist. Of the above items administered, the self-evaluation work sheet gave the counselors and teachers the greatest insight into the students' difficulties.

A counseling session for boys is handled by C.F.A. Powell, Counselor.



A major discovery made from working with these students was that they do value an education as much as any normal high school student. But the difference is that the "normal" high school student has a willing attitude to conform and be accepted. The dropout student, however, accepts nonconformance and gains satisfaction from challenging adult authority. He wants to be accepted as he is without a veneer of sophistication. To conform to the conventional is to be dishonest with himself. Conforming is "finking." Lacking acceptance from either students or faculty, these students all too often become a member of the "lonely crowd." One of the major tasks of the counselor was to assist the students in building trust and confidence in themselves and in acquiring an awareness of their strengths and weaknesses.

To maintain this confidence level, the students were treated as young adults. As one student said:

This kind of school is just right for me. There are others who are nearly adults like myself. We are treated like adults and there are no parents to interfere. This is not a machine school, but a school with friends that are interested in helping me go where I want to go.

Throughout the entire counseling program, reality counseling was emphasized. Test interpretation, be it psychological, vocational, or educational, was given directly to the students. At the end of the six-weeks period, each student was shown his rate of growth, measurable by standardized tests.

There were 21 different field trips, arranged for after-school hours, to various industries and governmental departments through Orange County. The Selective Service requirements were discussed with both the boys and girls by representatives of the armed forces.

In keeping with the main purpose of the summer session—reentry into an educational program—two things were done:

- Visits to local junior colleges and colleges were made on a mandatory basis.
- A panel of night school principals presented very realistic and practical ways for completing the high school requirements.

Parent conferences were an integral part of the total program. Counselors were able to hold at least a one hour conference with each parent or pair of parents. Two group-parent nights

were held—one during the first week and one during the last week of school. For the first parent night, 86 percent of the parents attended; 94 percent, the second time. The general acceptance of this program by the parents was excellent. The fact that they were vitally interested in the academic success and social adjustment of their children was a most important factor in the student's summer school success.

Curriculum

Many of the dropouts had encountered consistent failure in mathematics, English, reading, and spelling. The task of finding a new and different approach that might encourage the students to do better in these areas was complicated by the need for a curriculum flexible enough to work in a highly guidance-oriented program.

Albert Upton, Chairman of the English Department at Whittier College, had been instrumental in developing a special teaching method incorporating an analytical approach toward problem solving known as *creative analysis*. This method of instruction had not previously been used with high school students, but it had been successful with college freshmen. Contact was made with Dr. Upton, who agreed to help adapt this method of instruction to the high school dropout program.

The analytical approach to the subject fields of English, mathematics, reading, and spelling offered something new and positive for the student wherein he could realize a certain amount of success in his work each day. This success affected the student's attitude and behavior favorably, and the improved attitude remained through the six weeks period. He developed more confidence in his use of language and his written communications. His ability to verbalize ideas was greatly enhanced.

Student Activities

In order to balance the educational program, student activities were suggested and encouraged. The election of student body officers consisting of a president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer, and four student representatives was held during the first week of school.

Under the student leadership, the following activities were carried out:



Group counseling is effective in molding a student body into one unit.

- An editorial staff published a school newspaper called the *Greenjeans Gazette*. The name of the newspaper was selected in honor of the school custodian whose uniform included a pair of green jeans. This was the first notable activity by the students that indicated they were becoming a student body.
- The social committee arranged two activities during the summer, a school dance and a closing day beach and surfing party. The committee selected a dance band called "The Vibrations" because these musicians were high school dropouts.
- The yearbook committee designed and published a 27-page school annual called *Aries*, which was named after a small goat pastured on the back lot of the school grounds.
- A special event planned at the request of the five married girls was a "Baby Day." On the selected day not only did the five mothers bring their babies, but also six other girls borrowed babies to bring to school for the day. Many of the boys volunteered to do baby sitting chores.
- The drama club produced a four-scene comedy called "The Zone of Quiet," which was given on three different occasions. Several of the students who were in this play and are now back in regular school have interested their drama department in producing the same play.

These activities provided an opportunity for success and recognition for students who had not previously experienced these satisfactions. Students who participated most actively showed the most growth in leadership ability, maturity, stability, and self-assurance.

Results

The complete results of this project will not be known until the end of the follow-up study

on July 1, 1965. However, intellectual and academic growth did take place during this summer session. Tangible results were ascertained by the use of standardized tests given at the beginning (pretest) and end (posttest) of the program. The Henmon-Nelson test of mental ability—a group test—showed no significant difference between the means of the pretest and the posttest. However, in an individual case, one student improved his score from 111 on the pretest to 136 on the posttest.

To the 55 percent of the students who had scored in the low range on the Henmon-Nelson test, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Adolescents and Adults, form 1, was administered by Naoma S. Troxell, Director of Guidance and Health, Orange County. The results of the individual tests showed an increase of the mean IQ from 92 on the Henmon-Nelson to 99 on the Wechsler Scale. One student showed an increase from 70 in the group test to 113 in the individual test. Three students who had qualified previously for the educable mentally retarded program improved so much by the end of summer school that they were enrolled in regular classes this fall.

Phenomenal gains also were shown in the areas of vocational and occupational guidance. In a short, three-minute test administered on a pre-test and post-test basis, the students were asked to list all of the occupations they could think of within the time limit. The mean number of occupations listed by the students increased from 14.4 to 21.2.

It was significant that more dropouts chose careers as teachers and probation officers than chose any other professional occupation. This would seem an effort on their part to make a contribution to students like themselves and rather opposes the idea that they, as a group, reject education and law enforcement.

The most popular *technical choices* made by the students were airline stewardess, beautician, business manager, carpenter, commercial artist, electrician, interior decorator, mechanic, nurse, and secretary-typist.

The most popular *nontechnical choices* were construction worker, race car driver, salesman, and truck driver; of the nontechnical choices, these appeared to be the most lucrative or exciting.

The students were better informed about their abilities and about occupational opportunities as evidenced by their making more realistic choices at the end of the summer school program.

Academic results were measured by administering the Jastak Wide Range Achievement Test on a pre-test and post-test basis. A summary of the results follows:

Test	Mean grade equivalent	Range grade equivalent
ARITHMETIC		
Pretest	7.8	3.5-12.3
Posttest	8.5	3.8-13.6
READING		
Pretest	8.7	1.0-13.4
Posttest	9.7	1.3-15.2
SPELLING		
Pretest	7.3	2.2-10.7
Posttest	7.5	2.3-10.9

Measurable results have proven that most school dropouts possess the ability to profit from an educational program. This project has demonstrated that when students are properly motivated, they will stay in school. The opportunity to study academic subjects in small classes appeared to be a vital element in student achievement. The support and understanding of the staff members who were able to individualize their contact with the students greatly enhanced the success of this program.

Of the 60 students who enrolled for summer school, three notified the director by phone on the first day of school that they were unable to find transportation. A fourth student who attended the first day advised that he had joined the Navy. By the end of the first week, three replacements had been recruited by friends who were already in the school. There were 55 students who remained in the summer school program throughout the six weeks period and received regular high school credit. Of the four students who did not complete the program, one was hospitalized, a married girl moved out of state with her husband, and two students dropped from the program.

This project will be concluded on July 1, 1965. The three counselors will contact their summer school counselees at least once a month between September, 1964, and June, 1965. They have already been instrumental in enrol-

ling the students in school this fall and finding jobs for some of them. At present 26 students are enrolled full-time in high school; seven, full-time in junior college; six in adult night school; eight are working full-time; four are at home and not working—two of these are married mothers and one is betrothed; and four have moved out of the county without leaving a forwarding address.

The counselors have also been contacted by parents and school officials on several occasions when special problems have arisen. In two court cases the counselors have been requested to be character witnesses for their counselees. In each case the student has been released and returned to school.

Summary

The staff of the Orange County Summer Guidance School believed that the best approach to overcoming the failures of the dropouts would be to develop a program that was positive, dynamic, invigorating, and flexible. To provide this type of program of assistance to dropouts, it was necessary for the counselors and teachers to work harmoniously together. A daily staff meeting was held for discussion of the day's activities, including discussion of the students' individual problems. Plans for the next day's program were formulated to provide a positive and supportive attitude toward the students and their progress.

The measurable results of this summer guidance school have been examined by using standardized tests, and the success of the school is evident from the results. The students increased their academic ability in English, reading, writing, spelling, and mathematics. They showed phenomenal growth in self-confidence and self-realization of their own abilities. Their changes in behavior and dress were apparent to all. Even their absence from school appeared to have been beneficial from the standpoint of personal development.

The dropout students have gained new direction and motivation in making something of themselves. They have shown they are much better prepared to go back to school with a greater understanding of themselves and of the society in which they live. They have learned, now, from their experiences the differences between existing and living. They have come to

realize that working as a nonskilled person is undesirable and often depressing. Their job aspiration level has been increased through a more thorough knowledge of the better job opportunities. As one student said, "It is better to be miserable in school for a short time than it is to be miserable out of school for the rest of your life." This is reality for the school dropout.

Much of the success of this program depended on the ability of the counselors and teachers to work together as a team.

The president of the student body in appreciation dedicated the annual to the counselors: Mrs. Donna R. Nelson, Fullerton; C. F. A. Powell, Huntington Beach; Clifford Rothrock, Anaheim; and to the teachers: Mrs. Mary Wise, El Monte; James Henderson, Fullerton; and Bill Pierce, La Mirada. The student leader made this statement:

I feel I can freely say thank you for all of the students in helping us. It has been a privilege to attend the school, and I am sure we will never forget the finest faculty a student body could have.

Special acknowledgment is given to Max Rafferty, Superintendent of Public Instruction, for his personal interest and his visit to the summer school; to members of his staff, for their leadership and helpfulness; and to F. A. Grunenfelder, Orange County Superintendent of Schools, for his encouragement in making this project a reality.

This project was financially supported by the National Defense Education Act, the Orange County Board of Supervisors, and the office of the Orange County Superintendent of Schools.

~~SCHOOL BONDS~~

~~(Continued from page 4)~~

~~The schools are the key transmitter in this oncoming idea world~~

~~To business and professional men, the assumption of risks and the taking of chances are basic to your way of life. But I urge you not to play roulette with the educational opportunities of your children and of your grandchildren. Guarantee them the best in the educational field, and they will give this community and state the great future they deserve.~~

Summer High School for Dropouts

NYS ED

Orange County Schools
Santa Ana, California

INVITATIONAL SUMMER HIGH SCHOOL
FOR DROPOUTS

"The most exclusive public high school in the country -"

"A hundred percent successful dropout solution -"

These phrases characterize a special summer school program for 60 selected high school dropouts, conducted by a county schools office for the dropouts from the high schools within the county. Staffed by a principal, three teachers, three counselors and a school psychologist, students were interviewed, screened and selected for invitations to attend a six week session to be offered on a campus normally attended by mentally retarded elementary pupils. With data organized so that the common characteristics of the students were evident, curriculum materials, content and procedures were developed, "custom-designed" for the student body, on an ungraded basis. A major purpose was to prepare these dropouts, attitudinally and educationally, to re-enter a regular school program. Follow-up studies including monthly interviews, conducted since the first such program in 1964 offered convincing proof that a 1965 similar program would be offered to another group of dropouts. Successful practices employed in the special summer school have been emulated by the schools concerned as preventive measures.

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